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HOTEL REFORM.

THE resolution of Britons not to be slaves is a matter with which all the world is acquainted, and whenever the sentiment is mentioned in this happy land, it is certain to meet with adhesion and applause. At the same time, I think it should be stated in a foot-note, if not in an extra verse of *Britannia rules the Waves*, that her objection to servitude has only reference to the Foreign Invader; since there is no country upon the earth's surface where, in one respect at least, the people are more the victims of conventional usage and oppression than in our own. That very song which so patriotically proclaims our freedom, is generally sung after a great public dinner in some hotel, where the whole company have patiently submitted to be taxed thirty per cent. upon their food, cent. per cent. upon their malt liquors, and three hundred per cent. upon their wines—which last, it is almost certain, have not even been good of their kind. And yet, the papers, which assume to protect our liberties, inform us the next morning that the banquet at the *Cobweb* was served in Mr Boniface Spider's 'well-known liberal style,' and that the wines were all 'vintage-wines' which produced those tremendous headaches.

Now, one might expect to see this in the *Morning Advertiser*, which, I believe, is the organ of the Licensed Victuallers, but why should all the English newspapers unite alike in stating these fulsome falsehoods? Is the Publican interest so overwhelming that the truth cannot be revealed? Or are gratuitous dinners of such importance to the staff of a great journal, that they dare not detect the toughness of a gift-cutlet, or taste the cork in a gift-bottle? As for the charges, they, of course, seem reasonable enough to those who pay nothing—just as cab-fares are always light in the eyes of lawyers and doctors, whose clients and patients have to defray them—but will nobody who understands a good dinner ever be sent to report conscientiously even concerning our food? It has been often urged, that a public table can never be served so well as a private one; that some

confusion is unavoidable; that the plates cannot be guaranteed to be at the right temperature; that the currant-jelly is as likely to appear with the cheese as with the venison; and, in a word, that all such feasts must partake of the nature of a picnic, if not of a downright scramble. But surely with so much money as the guests are prepared to spend, cannot the number of attendants be increased, and so many waiters be attached to so many diners, with instructions not to offer so much as a knife to anybody else, even though it were to bleed him for the apoplexy? Who would not willingly give twenty-five shillings instead of his guinea to get a dinner a little more like that which he would have enjoyed at home?

But the fact is, not only are the public dinners at our hotels exceedingly bad, but the private ones also: there are not twenty establishments—the clubs excepted—in this so-called luxurious metropolis, where a man of the professional class, accustomed to good cooking at home, can walk in (with a friend to whom he wishes to be hospitable), being late for his own dinner, and be sure of getting as good a one as that he has missed. If they dine in the coffee-room, the heat, the smells, and the clatter are, to begin with, very serious obstacles to comfort; and if he is of an impatient temper, he will for certain bring on himself a fit of indigestion, since he is sure to be kept waiting there an inordinate time; but even if he take a private room, it is ten to one that he has to make some apology to his guest; the waiter will not bring the Wenham ice till the dinner is half over; at least one dish will arouse suspicions that it has done service at some other table; and the pastry, if he ventures upon that, will be a total failure. I am not speaking of a dinner at the *Clarendon* or the *Grosvenor*, ordered two days beforehand, and involving slavish flattery towards the clerk of the kitchen, and humiliating submission to the head-waiter, but such an entertainment as would be given under any gentleman's own roof to one whom he delights to honour. As for the wines, the guest will pronounce them admirable, since he knows you pay nothing under seven shillings a bottle for

what he is drinking; but you are well aware that the champagne at ten shillings and sixpence is certainly not the *Madame Chequet* who reposes in your cellar; while the *Branne Mouton* claret at the same price, is certainly a lighter and a thinner wine than you have seen it elsewhere.

I once made one of a party of three dining with the partner of a great wine-company at a hotel in Richmond, when my fellow-guest was a Sicilian, and the conversation turning upon the adulteration of wines, the latter observed that he could not even obtain Marsala pure in this country.

'You must have been very unfortunate,' observed our host smiling; 'I think you would find it good at this house. Mind—you need not drink it, and it is not to take the place of better wines; but this stigma upon my profession must be removed at once.—Waiter, bring a bottle of Marsala.'

The waiter disappeared, but presently came back again, rubbing his hands in a deprecatory fashion, and without the wine.

'I am very sorry, sir, but we have no wine of that inferior quality in the hotel at all.'

'Never mind,' said our host quietly; 'it is of no consequence.'

But when we were alone, he told us that his own firm had sent a pipe of Marsala to that very hotel only ten days before; and very likely some of it was in the sherry we were then drinking.

We are glad to see that reforms in this particular have tardily set in at some of the hotels at Greenwich, where it is now possible to give one's wife a dinner at a reasonable figure (five or six shillings a head), and you are not treated with hauteur by the waiter if you order Chablis. But even Chablis at Greenwich is still six shillings a bottle, and as for Mr Gladstone's clarets, they are not even mentioned in the wine-lists at all. So far as I know, there is not a hotel in England where any wine is to be procured under five shillings a bottle, or where what is called *vin ordinaire*—such as one drinks in tumblers abroad at *table-d'hôtes*—is to be got, even at a cent. per cent. profit to the proprietor. Yet, is there not a French Treaty and Beaujolais advertised in the *Times* every morning at a guinea a dozen? Of course, it is a fine thing to call Beaujolais wishy-washy stuff, only I do wish that certain hotels would give us Beaujolais, even at sixty shillings, instead of their 'prime Burgundies.' A good *vin ordinaire*—although at an extravagant price—would be really a boon at our fashionable summer caravanserais.

After all, this dinner-giving at hotels is an exceptional affair with us English, and we are as little inclined to scrutinise the bill for these 'once-and-away' extravagances, or what it is we pay for, as the charges of an undertaker, or the manner in which he has 'performed' the funeral of some dear departed; but the outrageous expenses of hotels are not confined to dinners: they extend to accommodation of all kinds—sitting-rooms, bed-rooms, attendance, and meals of all descriptions—so that in the case of a family they are absolutely ruinous. The British public of moderate means never enter an inn with the intention of residing there, for they know that they will have to pay starvation prices for everything. Now, why is this? Why should there not be hotels all over the country whither we Londoners with our families could repair for a fortnight or three weeks, and pay—say twenty-five per cent. more than we have to pay in the uncomfortable lodgings which we are now

compelled to occupy? We go out of town for health and for enjoyment, and therefore a place where everything is provided for us, as at a hotel, is the very thing we want: the vulgar lodging-house keeper, with her twaddle and her temper, is a great drawback to the pleasure of *Materfamilias*; the catering for the household among strange tradesmen is an immense trouble to her; and the waiting of lodging-house waiting-maids is not service, but rather the cause of waiting in other people. All these inconveniences we would avoid, if we possibly could: we would give a very considerable extra sum to be well housed, well cared for, well fed at a hotel instead, but we cannot give what would cripple our finances for months to come. We would much rather spend four weeks at the seaside instead of our usual five, and let the inn-keeper pocket the fifth week's expenses for his profit; but he is not content with any such percentage. For the same sum which it costs us in lodgings for five weeks, he will only keep us a fortnight, if so long.

I was lately stopping with some of my family at a hotel in the south; it was only necessary that we should remain on the spot in question for a few days, and I did not think it necessary to take lodgings for so short a time; moreover, I had been strongly recommended to 'try the inn.' Having tried it, I am sorry to say I find it guilty of extortion and excess; and I extract a few items of the bill to justify the verdict. The name of the establishment is of no consequence, since I have no reason to suppose its charges to be more extravagant than those of other inns, while its accommodation was certainly above the average. It boasted an excellent Refrigerator, marble baths, and a capital garden. But—one small biscuit, such as in the bakers' shops are sold at a halfpenny, cost sixpence. A cigar, which I would undertake to chop small and eat, if it stood the proprietor in more than threepence, cost sevenpence. Wax-candles (which were not wax) the price of which is fourpence each, were charged one shilling and eightpence a pair; and a new pair was put upon the table every night, and charged for, although we never burnt more than half an inch of them, for we were out of doors till almost bedtime. Myself and my son, who are not great beer-drinkers, were charged *five shillings* for one day's consumption of Mr Bass's liquor, which surely may be called 'bitter cups.' Dining very late, we had generally only a cup of tea apiece (one shilling), and nothing to eat with it; but upon one occasion my wife 'thought she could eat a slice of thin bread and butter.' Five slices (the number of our party) were accordingly brought up in a plate, and figured in the bill at half-a-crown. Only one slice was eaten, so we paid sixpence each for an article of consumption that had cost less than a halfpenny—the landlord must therefore have cleared about three thousand per cent. It may be said that the other slices were not eaten; but this was not the case, since, to my great amusement, I happened to see them subsequently carried into an adjoining apartment, there to realise their three thousand per cent. out of somebody else.

Everything else at this hotel was priced at these ruinous rates, except the bedrooms, which were not very good ones; and I think Mr Spider Boniface entrapped a few flies into his cobweb by his comparatively small charges in that respect; they imagined—poor wretches—that their board would bear

some proportion to their lodging. The sitting-rooms, too, were not very dear, considering that they were very pretty.* Now, why should these extortions be practised? I should not have complained to the landlord if they had been twice as great, for the remedy does not lie in his hands; but having paid his bill, and told him we had enjoyed ourselves (which was quite true), I entered into conversation with him respecting 'the system.'

'I suppose,' said I, inflating my chest like a millionaire, 'that people of moderate means do not patronise your hotel much; they all go to those miserable lodgings.'

'Well, sir, they may come here *once*; but we never see them again. Hotels of this sort are only for first-class gentry like yourselves.'

Accepting Mr B.'s compliment, with thanks, I cannot accept his conclusion. There is little or no difference between a good hotel and a bad one, as respects their charges; and since, if one goes to a hotel at all, one does so for luxury and convenience, who would think of going to an inferior one if he could help it.

That a great want of good hotel accommodation has been felt in this country, is evident from the huge caravanserais that are now being erected in London and at every fashionable watering-place. But it is not only for the upper ten thousand that these are needed, but for the fifty thousand that immediately succeed them in the social scale. Now, these mammoth inns, which pretend to cater for that vast class, do nothing of the kind. Such have no tariff to suit them—no, not if they should be content to be lodged on the thirteenth floor, and to use that terrible machine, which a few more accidents will cause to be entitled the Dead Lift. Their pretence at economy is a mere sham; for a sitting-room on the fourth floor, at eight-and-sixpence a day, is not made cheap by the fact, that there are sitting-rooms on the first floor for which some people are rich enough to pay two guineas. Nay, there is something wrong even about their improved system of charging for 'attendance' in the bill; for though the waiter, and the chamber-maid, and the Boots do not absolutely *say* 'Give,' they look it; and I, for one, am not strong-minded enough to recall to their recollection that their services have been already remunerated. How can we expect, indeed, while the whole hotel system remains one of the most ridiculous extortion, that these poor underlings should acquiesce in that one solitary reform, which does not decrease their master's gains, but their own.

It is far from the present writer's wish to see the domestic character of the English people in any way deteriorated. I should be sorry to have them always frequenting hotels, as Germans and other foreigners do, in preference to their own homes; but I do think there should be hotels in England whither a man of moderate means could repair with his family, during his autumn holiday, and at the many other times when they want 'fresh air' or a 'whiff of the sea,' in place of being driven, as he now is, by the ruinous and unnecessary expense of such establishments, into uncomfortable

* This apparent reasonableness in the matter of house-room is the sole bid Mr Boniface makes for popularity; unsuspecting Paterfamilias perceives that he can sit and sleep at the hotel for considerably less than twice the sum he has to give for good lodgings, and he therefore reckons (without his host) that he will be able to eat and drink at not more than the same increase of cost.

lodgings. Let hotel companies be established which shall offer the comforts of a home at a fairly remunerative rate, but not at starvation prices; where it shall not be incumbent upon the guest to order bad champagne 'for the good of the house;' and where the cost shall bear some sort of proportion to the articles consumed. In such a Hotel Company, feeling perfectly certain of its success when its character shall be once understood and established, I shall be happy to take shares.

THE CLYFFARDS OF CLYFFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LOST SIR MASSINGER,' &c.

CHAPTER XL.—RUPERT'S WOOING.

WHEN Mildred reached the chamber where Mrs Clyffard and herself were accustomed to take their morning meal together, she found Rupert awaiting her. It was strange enough to see him there, for, to her knowledge, he had not set foot within that room three times since she had been at Clyffe; but it was worse than strange, since her aunt must needs have sent her thither to meet him. How different he looked from his brother, whom she had just left; the one bright, strong, and joyous, the other sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. And yet he was fair to look upon; his wealth of light-brown hair crowned a noble forehead; his well-cut features shewed his gentle birth; while the deep-sunk eyes he fixed upon her with melancholy longing were very soft and kind.

'Mildred,' said he frankly, 'your aunt has bid me hither for a purpose which it will not be hard for you to guess, remembering what has already passed between us. For my part, I would fain have deferred to press a suit which has so lately met with coldness, if not rejection; but she says I do not know the way to a maiden's heart. My wooing, mayhap, has been unapt and clumsy?'

'Nay, Rupert; you have been courteous and gentle in your love, as in all else. Never was homage from a noble heart more nobly proffered. No girl could hope to have a wooer more—'

'Words, words, words!' sighed Rupert wearily, 'all ending in a "but," as at the bottom of the sparkling bowl the poison lurks. I thought—but it was she who bade me think—that this time something else than pity, Mildred'—

'Pity, Rupert?'

'Ay, for you must pity me, since I think you do not hate me, and alas! you do not give back love for love. You see me—what I am; a youth, yet very sad; one rich in this world's goods, yet poor beyond the poorest, since you refuse to share them. And yet you see not half my evil case, and know not half what it is in your power to confer. Look you. If a man like me besought your hand in marriage, and you loved him not, yet if, besides, he lay in peril of his life, and could only by your wedding him be saved—would you wed him then, for pity's sake, if not for love's, hoping that love would come?'

'Such a thing could not be, Rupert. It is idle to speak of it.'

'But if it *were*, I say. What then?'

'I would do my very best to save him.'

'You *would*!' cried Rupert joyfully. 'God bless you for those words. One kiss, sweet Mildred—nay, pardon me; I had forgotten; my soul is drunk with love. How my heart beats—how my brain whirls! Pent up within these walls, I

suffocate. How cool and calm yon moat looks! Will you take boat with me, and let me row you round the castle-walls, as I have often done before, and tell you there, where you have listened to so many tales of mine, but none so pitiful as this, the thing I have to say!

Never was man so changed in such brief space as Rupert while he spoke these words: his pale cheeks glowed with pleasure; his large eyes beamed with hope; his head, which thought and study were wont to bow, was held erect.

It pained Mildred to the core to say: 'You are clinging to a shadow, Rupert. Though your talk is unintelligible to me, I feel you are encouraging a baseless hope.' Yet she did say it bravely.

'But you *will* come!' cried he, no whit discouraged by her words. 'You will hear what I have to say? But stay—you have not yet breakfasted. Alas! what a selfish wretch I am!'

'I could not eat, Rupert, just now. I am quite ready to hear what you have to say, although I warn you it will be useless pleading.'

They wound down a private stair to a low arched door that opened on the castle terrace, then betwixt the gray wall, teeming with fruit, and the lichen-covered balusters, whereon the peacock strutted and flirited his feathers in the sun, they walked side by side; down the broad stone-steps, bordered with scarlet flowers in massy urns, on to the shaven lawn, and so to the brink of the black moat, all starred by water-lilies. Here they took boat, and Rupert oared them to the middle of the sluggish stream, then rested on his oars, and broke the autumn silence.

'Dear Mildred, I have looked forward to this hour for many and many a day. *Here*, I have often thought—often when we were together, but as boy and girl, brother and sister, not as now—I will one day tell her all; here, where we have passed whole summer days, and she has seen me at my best and merriest (if, indeed, I have been ever merry), seems the fittest place. Nor sea nor stream can ever be so dear to me as this same moat: alone I have listened here for hours to the croak of the slow-flapping rook, and the crow, half-choked, half-clear, from the distant farm, and never wished for better music. But that was before I heard your voice, sweet Mildred!' Here he paused a moment, then resumed reflectively: 'How slowly the waters creep, as though they loved to linger about this ancient place, and were loath to leave it for the hurrying river; and yet, see, they are dark as Death, and the bottom is choked with trailing weed. So has it been with the Clyffards themselves, Mildred. We have kept ourselves so long from the great tide of life, that we have grown stagnant, and—and—what is stagnant is unhealthy. Where there is nothing to hasten the pulse, to stir the blood, the mind itself will sooner or later grow'—he was looking at her, she felt, so fixedly that she dared not raise her eyes to meet his gaze—'will grow—lethargic.'

'You are not lethargic, Rupert.'

'Not yet,' said he; 'I trust not yet.'

There was a pathos in his low earnest tone that might have almost moved a slighted woman; no wonder, then, that it pierced Mildred's heart.

'Dear Rue,' she murmured, 'it is not well to speak of such things as these.'

'But how much worse,' sighed he, 'to think of them and not to speak. Oh, do not think that I am hoodwinked, Mildred, by aught that men can

say or leave unsaid about poor me. I know the falseness of their assuring speech, as I know the reason of their silence—their "Hush! Rupert is coming; not one word about the Curse!"'

'Rue, Rue, dear Rue,' sobbed Mildred tenderly, 'this is the very thing you should not do, the very talk'—

'Nay, Mildred, hear me out. Oh, do not—do not join them in that cuckoo-note. Oh, do not thou turn against me, my one hope.'

'Against you, Rupert! I—I? When there is not a groom in Clyffe that does not love you.'

'Ay; but not as I would have *thee* love. And if thou turnst not to me, Mildred, thou wilt work more against me than if all the world beside had sworn my ruin. Oh, how to tell thee—how to let thee know what hangs upon thy answer, and yet not fright thee, Mildred! Nay, tremble not, sweetest; thou has nought to fear, whether thy "yes" shall bathe my life in sunshine, or thy "no" provoke the threatening moon to swift eclipse!'

His tones were earnest, but not wild; and though far from mechanically, he spoke as one who has well conned beforehand the substance of what he has to say.

'You are very young,' said Mildred after a little, 'and yet have lived your life here amid the mouldering past, afar from all things that befit the young. Your childhood, soon deprived of a mother's care—like mine, Rupert—has been passed among menials, who, flattering themselves they were pleasing you, pleased their own vulgar natures by feeding an imagination, hungry as flame, with stories of your ancient house, exaggerated, false, and monstrous histories, but which, since they were about the Clyffards, seemed in some sort real. They sowed an evil seed in a soil fertile enough in fancies of its own, but rich and ready to the hand of the true husbandman, had such there been. How soon would yonder well-trimmed garden left to itself become mere wilderness, and how much sooner if you planted it with docks and darnels!'

'Go on, sweet Mildred; these are Raymond's words, but in thy mouth how welcome—welcome as the dawn—welcome as the soft-falling summer rain upon the aching head and stretched-out hands.'

'Raymond is wise, Rupert, although he has little book-learning.'

'I know it, girl, yet he cannot comfort me as thou canst. The uneasy pillow of the sick man cannot be smoothed save by one loving hand; and royal Edward's wound be sure would not have healed so swiftly had any lips sucked forth the poison save those of his true wife.' Then pausing for a moment, he added in an earnest whisper: 'There is poison in *my* blood, Mildred, and you must be my Eleanor.'

'Nay, Rupert; there is no poison in your blood, but as you said yourself, it flows too sluggishly; you need employment, action—you should leave home a while.'

'What!' he broke forth, 'without *thee*? Never—no, never, Mildred! Be mine, and I will go with thee whither thou wilt, and do thy bidding, whatsoever it be. But I will never leave thee, be sure of that, my girl: thou shalt escape me never, no, not in death itself; for if thou diest, then will I die too, and climb up after thee to highest heaven, though it were from the abyss of hell. *Then* surely, being a blessed spirit crowned and palmed, thou

wouldst reach out a saintly hand to lift me into bliss, and save my soul; and therefore *now*, being an earthly angel, wilt thou not give me that same hand, and save—ah, save my *Reason*?

The dews of terror stood upon Mildred's brow, for wild and vehement as was Rupert's speech, his eyes spoke things more terrible. All of a sudden she knew that that which she had been combating for his sake as a mere shadow, was a substantial evil which had already fallen upon him. Poor Rupert had all along been right; she was talking with a Madman! And yet she pitied him far more than feared him even now. The passionate yearning of his last appeal melted her heart within her.

'The case I put in yonder room,' he continued, 'was my own—for is not madness Death?—and hence my soul was glad as yonder bird's what time thou saidst: "I would do my very best to save him." Come, Mildred, say thou wilt once more.'

The feathered thief in view of the fruit upon the terrace-wall was caroling his blithest; note on note he poured forth his melodious joy a while, then bringing his last harmonies together, like a hasty grace, he flew down to the ripening pears. Then in the songless silence, Mildred answered Rupert: 'So help me Heaven, I will do my very best to save thee.' She spoke not without thought—for while a black-bird sings is time enough to serve a nimble brain—and while she spoke she watched him narrowly.

'My life, my love, my all!' murmured he in a hushed rapture.

'But, Rupert'—

'Nay,' he interrupted; 'mar not the music of your last rich words. I guess what you would say, and therefore there is no need to speak. You do not love me yet—I know it, but in time 'tis possible— There, there, I give you time—I can keep my soul in patience, being sure of you; hopeful that the bud of Pity may flower into something sweeter, and being sure that when it does so bloom, it blows for me—for me.'

Across his voice, faint and aswoon with love, came Mrs Clyffard's clear and peremptory tones from the balcony outside her breakfast-room: 'Mildred, the breakfast waits, dear child. Good Rupert, put her ashore.'

The young man obeyed at once, and as he took Mildred's fingers in his own to hand her to the bank, gave them a significant squeeze. Far from returning this, she bowed to him haughtily, and walked hastily away.

'Ungenerous,' murmured she to herself, almost in tears, 'and unlike a gentleman! I could not have believed it of a Clyffard. Not mad, indeed, but cunning as the maddest: had love been mine to give, I verily believe he would have won it. False and unfair! Does he suppose I took his dropped kerchief for a water-lily, or that I was blind to her answering signal. And did she ever speak to us like that before—"dear Mildred," and "good Rupert?" My loving aunt must take me for a fool indeed.'

CHAPTER XII.—RIBBLE CAVE.

The hills about Craven, if they are not mountains in the eyes of members of the Alpine Club, are believed to be such by the inhabitants of the district, who (one would think) ought to know. At all events, they are very high hills indeed for

poor England, which has of late years been understood to be a flat country. The boastful local proverb—

Penyghent, Pendle, and Ingleborough,
Are the highest hills the country thorough—

is not, indeed, quite correct. In Mr Hurtley's *Craven*, the height of Ingleborough, as measured by 'a famous pedestrian'—we should imagine Mr Walker—is given at five thousand two hundred and eighty feet, or about two thousand feet higher than Helvellyn; but this is a slight exaggeration. Like a county magnate who lives close to the Lord Lieutenant, the Craven hills are minified by the neighbourhood of their High Mightinesses the Lords of Lakeland, by many of which they are overtopped. Still, as I have said, they are very lofty, and command a great range of view. From the crown of Ribble, for instance, there was (and is) a splendid view. To westward lay the unchangeable sea, flecked by many a sail as now, although no smoke-pennon flew from steamship; while over the perilous sand-road athwart Morecambe Bay you might see, when the tide was low, great companies of people, both on horseback and in wheeled conveyances, where now there are but a very few. How picturesque those little caravans must have looked as they crossed the waste of sand, which in a few hours the swirling sea would devour, silent and swift; how lovely that level way, from which every trace of man's travel was swept away every day! Then the crescent bays, white as the moon, with the boats lying high and dry in them; the belts of woodland descending to the very water's edge; and Kent and Leven sweeping from the rich green hills in many a shining curve! The top of Ribble was also a sight in itself, having a shaven crown, where a Druidical circle once had stood—a very priest of hills; and yet were none of these glories to be compared with the wondrous wealth which lay within him. I do not speak of the gold and silver coins—centuries old—which in flood-time one of his streams would cast out (as it does yet) from some far-hidden treasury, but of the glittering palace, built, doubtless, for the king of the fairies, but which had lapsed for many a year into mortal hands, and was termed by them Ribble Cave.

Surely, of all discoveries which have power to charm the human soul, that of a stalactite cavern must be the chiefest. To be the first to descry a new continent, or even an island unmarked in any chart, must be a striking sensation; the watcher of the skies, too, when a new planet 'swims into his ken,' must enjoy a great experience; but neither of these sensations seems so overwhelming as that which I have in my mind. For suppose—and I am only supposing what has happened—that I have lived within the shadow of a great hill all my life, which the learned inform me is of limestone, and that my forefathers for many generations have lived by the same hill without further information about it, if so much; and suppose there is a cavern in that hill, of no very interesting character, described by the authorities to be mainly 'calcareous secretion,' which has been used by myself and my progenitors as a stabling for cattle in bad weather—well, during an autumn thunderstorm, I take shelter in this spot alone, and with a pickaxe which happens to be there, I amuse or warm myself by picking into the hill. What follows? Why, a mighty stream of water, from

which I escape with difficulty, and which takes a quarter of an hour to rush away, and renders the neighbouring stream too big for its banks. Never since the Rock of Horeb was there surely such a miracle. Awe-stricken, and yet delighted, I approach the aperture, which the flood has vastly enlarged, and behold—a gloom profound, a depth of darkness, I do not know how deep, but at all events Space where heretofore had been thought to be Solidity. Columbus, it is true, discovered solidity where there was thought to be space, but the wonder is no less because the conditions happen to be reversed. Thus far, then, Columbus and I are equal, but from this point he cannot hold a candle to me. If he could, and brought it to my newly-discovered cavern, what a treasure-house of Fairyland would be revealed! 'Stalactite and stalagmite,' observes the geologist pompously. Presumptuous fool! what thy dull science teaches thee is the least part of the wonder.

For how many thousand years have these columns of crystal, these sparkling and pendulous transparencies, full of hidden music, had their glorious being? For whom were these stately halls devised in darkness, and for whom furnished with such unearthly pomp? What forms, what spirits have threaded these winding passages, carpeted with silver sand, upon which no mortal foot since man was made has trodden save mine own? Whence springs, and whither leads this sunless stream, whose murmur, pregnant with a mystery almost divine, has never fallen upon human ear before? Why should these wonders have been locked so fast, that no grateful tongue—at least of man—has ever given to God the glory of them? And was it chance that laid the secret bare at last, through me; and but for me, for thousands of years to come, would still these unimaginable splendours have been veiled from human eyes—this hill have been a hill like other hills? Somewhat after this fashion, surely, might any man speak who has made a discovery such as that which we are considering. Now, this very thing had happened in Ribble Fell, and not so very many years before the period of which we write, as to rob it of its Wonder. But people in those days—as we have had occasion to observe before—were not so enamoured of Nature as at present, and listened somewhat apathetically to any secret she might have to tell them. The glories of earth, and sea, and sky were for the most part lost upon them; with much conventional veneration and superstition, they were terribly at ease in the true Sion, and regarded all natural phenomena with the stoicism of savans. Two or three hundred folks had visited Ribble Cave upon its first discovery; but by this time visitors had become rare. A professed guide to underground Ribble did indeed reside in the hamlet of Clyffe; but if he had not followed some other calling in addition, he would have made but an indifferent livelihood. Not above a dozen times that summer had he been seen escorting strangers through the park upon their way to the cave. The entrance to it was just beyond the deer-fence, and where the fell commenced; a wild and desolate spot, where a stream ran down a deep and woodless ravine, with Ribble upon one side with its subterranean palace, and on the other a still loftier hill, whose 'pastures,' separated by natural walls of limestone, presented the appearance of a gigantic fortification.

Here, at the hour appointed, Mildred and

Raymond met. She had more than once visited the cave, in company with members of the family; while he was familiar with every part of it, with certain exceptions. It was known that the excavations—if such they can be called—were far more extensive than those chambers, lofty and far-stretching as they were, which visitors could explore. The stream which accompanied their steps wherever they went, had its exit at the other extremity of the hill; and outside it, could here and there be heard, by laying the ear to the ground, flowing in places where it was known that the frequented subterranean passages did not exist. Before the pickaxe had let the light into Ribble, such sounds had, of course, been ascribed to the Devil, nor had he even now lost all the credit of them. From the main passage there forked short ones, right and left, but they all ended more or less abruptly, in some hall or grotto; so, provided that you kept your torch alight, there was little danger of losing your way. The visitor who wished to penetrate to the extremity, had only to follow the windings of the stream, between which and the shining wall there was always room for him, and he could not fail to reach his goal—a splendid chamber, domed with glittering spars, in one dark corner of which his guide, the stream, sped away under a low-browed arch, beyond which no man, save one, had ever followed it. Raymond Clyffe alone had ventured once, with a lighted candle fastened to his forehead, to trust himself to the mysterious stream. Deep and dark it ran for a short distance, with only a few inches between the rock and it, and then emerged into a hall, more vast and beautiful—so the adventurer declared—than any it had yet visited. From hence, as it seemed to him, the stream dipped suddenly, forming a sort of cataract in a tunnel, down which, if a man should go, it was certain he would never return. It was feat enough to have visited Finis Hall, as Raymond had entitled it, and that experience had never been repeated.

Familiar, however, as both he and Mildred were with the subterranean glories of Ribble, they could not repress exclamations of delight as each, with torch in hand—the materials for exploration being always to be found in the external cave or cattle-stable—came suddenly upon some crystal wonder, which flashed into being at their approach. They seemed by tacit consent to have postponed the talk, which they had come thither to hold without interruption, until they had reached 'the Cathedral,' as the domed chamber was not inaptly termed; moreover, sustained conversation was rendered difficult by the nature of the way, which sometimes was so narrow that it necessitated their walking one behind the other, and sometimes was so low that they had to creep with their heads bent. It was from a sort of tunnel of this kind that they emerged at last, after a quarter of a mile of fairyland, into the stately place that was the last of the suite of royal apartments which (I fear without King Oberon's permission) had been thrown open to the public. The two torches were not sufficient to evoke the splendours of the lofty roof: properly illuminated from beneath, it shewed like a magnificent mass of candelabra, but now it only twinkled here and there, like stars out of the darkness. It seemed as though so vast a roof must needs have pillars for its support, and the fairy architect, as if in anticipation of such an idea, had mocked the eye with crystal columns, separated, as it seemed

at first, by violence in the centre, but which had in truth never been joined; the one half rising from the silver floor, the other pendent from the crystal ceiling. From the ceiling, too, hung mighty icicles, like the pipes of an organ, which, being struck, emitted a melancholy music, that went wailing through chamber after chamber, as though in sorrow for their departed tenants. Here and there, the stalagmites took forms very similar to the human, though generally with the head or arms missing, like torsos in a sculpture-gallery; but almost in the centre of the place there was a natural statue—for it really might be called so, so perfect were its proportions—of a woman with a child in her arms, a very Lot to look at (of crystal, not of salt), and the child of fretted silver.

'That is certainly very like,' observed Mildred with a shudder, as they came upon this wonder. 'Was there really any truth in the story which it is said to tell?'

'A woman and her child were lost here; that is true, and sad enough for all the truth,' returned Raymond. 'How they got here, without light or guide (if they did so), is strange enough, but having done so, it is small wonder that they were lost here. Although I could find my way hence, blindfold, to the outer air, almost as quickly, perhaps, as another with a torch, yet one unaccustomed to the place might easily fail to do so. The very narrowness of the way, and the close neighbourhood of the stream, which ought in reality to insure escape, would confuse the wits of a poor terrified creature, with a little one in her arms too.'

'Then Guy, you think, was not to blame?'

'I do not know, Mildred. He had enough to answer for—if a tenth of the tales about him be true—without this double murder. At all events, as the bodies were found and buried, it is impossible to adopt the vulgar story that this is the petrification of them, even if it were a petrification at all, as it manifestly is not.'

'It was this imputed crime, however, that is said to have brought the curse upon the Clyffards, is it not?'

'My dearest Mildred, why be so solicitous about these *It is said*?'

'I really have a reason for my question, Raymond.'

'Well, then, it is true that from the period when this sad incident took place, five generations back—for we are but a short-lived family—the eldest son of our race has never inherited Clyffe—has always, in a word, been Mad. But we came here to talk of a worse thing than madness, Mildred—of the wicked deceit of one that is in her right mind, such as it is.'

'I fear so, Raymond. Nay, since I saw you, I—I almost fear that she has enmeshed Rupert.'

'Nay, impossible,' exclaimed the young man vehemently. 'A more noble heart than Rupert's does not beat; a nature more simple, guileless'—

'And therefore,' interrupted Mildred earnestly, 'one only too easily made prey of. Rupert and she have some understanding between them, even now—of that I am certain. She will set brother against brother, if she can, be sure.'

'She never will, Mildred. Let her hoodwink him never so much, one word from his old playmate, lover, brother—Tush, why, the dear lad has only me to lean on; he comes to me as the very physician of his being; while I live, he shall find me faithful, taking his love for fee, and even if not so requited, faithful still.'

'Kind, generous Raymond, I am sure of that! Yet what hearts are so bound together, but that a false tongue can cut them asunder?'

'Ours, Mildred, ours,' he whispered, pressing his lips to hers; and 'Ours' murmured she again with loving gratitude.

'You make me happy, credulously happy, Raymond, in spite of myself. Nothing, indeed, can come between such love as ours; the very hint would make a foe of him that spoke it. But friendship however close, and though cemented by one blood, is not so firm—even a tale-bearer, a mere malicious fool, can loosen it; while little by little the serpent tongue can always sap it with its poisoned lies. A while ago, did not your father love you? Did it then seem possible that a day would come when you would welcome a summons to his private chamber merely to take his evening meal with him, with a great leap of joy, as a rare favour, as you did this very morning? And if a father's heart can be so estranged, why not a brother's?'

'Tis justly argued, Mildred,' answered the young man fondly; 'and what you say is dear to me, being the logic of love; but your sweet solicitude for me makes you blind as Cupid himself. My father is an old man—alas! that I should have to say it—misruled by a young wife. But what hold can Mrs Clyffard have on Rupert, that he should believe her, speaking lies against his own brother?'

'She may make him jealous, Raymond.'

'Jealous!' echoed the young man, turning pale as the white column beside him—'jealous, of what? of whom? Not, Heaven forbid, of thee, Mildred?'

'I say not of what, dear Ray,' answered she hastily; 'only beware. I know not what vile plots may be going on against us. That which I do know, and which I am come here to tell, is vile enough, and may well prepare us for what might otherwise seem incredible and monstrous. The "Fair Lady" of Clyffe, of whom such terrible things are told, at whose name your father's melancholy deepens, and your brother shudders, has only a too real existence.'

'What! my Mildred superstitious? This is sad indeed.'

'Nay, I do not speak of spirits, Raymond. This "Fair Lady" is Aunt Grace herself, and bodes more harm to you and yours than ever did bird or banshee.'

'What mean you, Mildred?'

'I mean the very words I say. Mrs Clyffard is trading on the foolish superstitions of your house. She has tricked your father—Heaven grant it may not be so deeply but that he may be undecieved—not only by fostering within him the credulity that is his bane, but by masquerading, acting the very part of her of whom he stands in fear. She appears to him as that very spectre; ay, indeed she does. When she heard from her own people—and of my blood, alas, alas!—that Cyril was greatly worse, and like to die, she played the ghost to her own husband. I suspected this before; but until you told me how Clement had been frightened in the Blue Chamber, I could not be quite sure.'

'And how should that make you sure, Mildred?'

'Because that room is the fittest of all for such a trick. Your father is so ready to believe the thing, and so unsuspicious of the only person who could, or would, so cruelly deceive him, that any place or time would serve her turn with him. But Clement, who believes nothing, but only fears, and

who has good cause besides for mistrust of his sister, could not be fooled so easily. Now, listen, Ray. When first I came to Clyffe, my aunt, meaning, perhaps, to make me wholly hers, a willing instrument of all her plots and plans, or partly perhaps in boast, to shew how she was all in all with your poor father, disclosed to me several things which perhaps she now wishes she had concealed. Among other matters, she confided to me certain secrets of the house, unknown to either Rupert or yourself, but which had been revealed to her by your father. Let not that fret you, Ray; he doubtless kept them from you, well judging there was too much mystery about the place already. However, so it was, that while the household and yourselves knew where the priests were hid in the evil times, between the floor and ceiling of the bedroom in the North Tower, and how the panel in the Long Gallery slides aside with grim Sir Bevis' legs upon it, yet none but the Master and his wife knew of the Priests' Chamber within the chimney of the Blue Room. A man may sound the wainscots, and fasten all the doors, and think himself secure from interlopers, and yet his enemy may be in hiding within a foot of him as he sits by the inhospitable hearth. Sir William, who was wont to lie with pistols beneath his pillow, was fallen upon and slain, she told me, by these means; and thereby, I am right sure, did Aunt Grace gain access to the Blue Room last night, and hem the sheet, which it is no wonder that her brother took for a shroud. As for the falling of the floor, Clement doubtless spoke truth in that; a hinge scarce visible save to attentive eyes runs across the polished planks; nay, more, the floors of the two diased rooms beneath are similarly provided, so that if the Clyffard would kill his guest, he had only to withdraw a bolt or two, and the victim fell a sheer thirty feet upon the stones of the guard-chamber. Aunt Grace knew that Clement would never have the courage to leave his bed, or she would scarcely have ventured to that length with him. She holds my memory as cheaply as my mind, else it is somewhat rash in her, being my enemy and yours, to forget that she was once my patroness, and condescended to let me know so much.

If Mrs Clyffard could have seen this girl as her bosom rose and fell with indignant passion, and her form trembled, but not with fear, she would have despised her niece no longer, but have taken shield as well as spear. Thalestris herself was defied by the erst obedient Lampeto, when that which was dearer than her life was threatened by the imperious queen.

'Dear Ray, there is no time to lose,' continued Mildred; 'Aunt Grace designs to strike a blow to-night which it behoves us to anticipate. She will repeat her stage-play this very night, as I believe; and if so, we must take your father behind the scenes. At supper, strive to move him all you can; tell him how honest is your heart towards him, and how his mind is warped by evil influence from— Hush! quiet! Heaven help us, some one has entered the cave. I saw a gleam of light yonder.'

'Not so, Mildred; you are excited, and imagine things that have no existence. I told old Angus that no visitors were to be shewn the place this afternoon, under any circumstances. Well, and when I have warned my father—all in vain, I fear—what then?'

'When you hear the great organ in the gallery play *Achieved is the Glorious Work*, bid him follow you through the turret-door and out upon the roof. Tell him that if you fail to prove your words by what he shall there behold with his own eyes, that you are content to fall without the pale of his good favour for the future. Trust to me, Ray: he shall see that which will wreck his confidence in this false woman who makes so certain of thy ruin, dear one, at once and for ever. Then tell him— By Heaven, there is the light again! I see your brother's shadow. If he finds us here together, all is lost—all, all! She overheard our trust, and has betrayed us.'

'I know not the reason of your sudden terror, Mildred; but I know you are wise and true to me,' whispered Raymond in hurried but earnest accents. 'All shall not be lost, love; nor shall I be lost'—

'What! you would not tempt that dreadful passage twice? moreover, he would see the glimmer of thy torch.'

'Ay, but not thus;' he cast the flaming pine-branch into the dark stream, which quenched it on the instant, and plunging in himself, followed the blackened wood as it was sucked beneath the frowning arch.

Mildred uttered one sharp scream; for her lover was gone from her, without even a farewell kiss, and now, may be, was battling with black death: but the next instant, with a mighty effort, she decked her ghastly face with a set smile, like a counterfeit wreath upon a tombstone, and turned it to meet Rupert Clyffard.

GAMAHES.

THE word which heads this article is used by Albertus Magnus and others to denote those stones on which the figures of men, animals, or other objects are naturally painted, embossed, or engraven. Gaffarel, librarian to Cardinal Richelieu, derives the word *gamahes* from the French *camaius*, an agate, as it was chiefly on that kind of stone that figures could be seen.

Gamahes are to be met with at the present day, but the figure represented is generally that of a branch of a tree, or a similarly simple object, though sometimes jaspers and agates are found, on which, with the aid of the imaginative faculties, more complicated objects, such as a grove of trees, or a human face, may be traced. A very good specimen of the latter class may be seen in the British Museum, where there is an agate on which is figured a bust, with a face resembling that of the poet Chaucer. In old treatises on natural history, geology, and travels, figured stones, which the authors profess to have themselves seen, are often mentioned. The descriptions of some shew a complicity of details, and marvellous faithfulness of rendering, which eclipse the gamahes of these degenerate days. It is of these that we purpose treating here. In doing so, though it might at first sight appear best to classify them according to the manner in which the figure is expressed, no attempt has been made with that object, as the descriptions do not always indicate distinctly whether the figure was painted or engraven, and they are therefore merely ranged under the name of the author who has seen or best described them. The stones on which the figures are embossed, with a few exceptions, the more interesting of which

will be mentioned here, consist of what are now regarded as petrifications, and therefore scarcely come within the scope of an article on such *usus nature* as gamahes.

Pliny states in his *Natural History* that there was an agate in the possession of King Pyrrhus on which were naturally painted the nine Muses, richly attired, and as if dancing, with Apollo in their midst playing on a harp. He also describes a block of marble, which had been split with wedges, on the inner side of which was found a figure of Selene, represented by the veins on the stone. In another part of the same work, he speaks of stones being found in India with the figures of rivers, woods, beasts of burden, and the trappings of horses on them. Albertus Magnus, in his treatise on metals and metallic substances, mentions having seen, on the sarcophagus of the Three Kings at Cologne, an onychine stone, a little broader than a man's hand, on which the heads of two young men were depicted in brilliant white colours. The one head lay on the top of the other, so that of the undermost there only appeared the nose and a part of the mouth. Underneath, there was a stone of the colour of the human nail, which represented a garment decorated with flowers. On the onychine stone, there was also a picture of an African's head with a long beard, and the whole was encircled by a serpent, like a garland surrounding profiles on a medal. The representation of the various figures was so perfect, that Albertus Magnus thought it was artificial, until, by subjecting it to tests, he satisfied himself that it was the workmanship of nature alone. He also saw at Venice a marble stone on which there was a picture of a crowned head, with so much majesty in the countenance, eyes, and mouth, that all who saw it were astonished at the general expression of the face. This figure was blemished by the forehead being disproportionately large. This he attributed to the hot vapour, of which the stone had been formed, owing to its strength, having mounted higher than it ought to have done. Jerome Cardan, an eccentric Italian physician and astrologer, who starved himself to death, to verify his own prediction of the time of his decease, though rather sceptical as to the exclusively natural production of the gamahes mentioned by others, describes some which he had himself seen, and never doubted were engraved by nature alone. Amongst others, he describes an agate, the black lines on which formed what he regarded as a picture of Galba the emperor. He states that the sight of this stone induced such sweet dreams that he seemed to renew his youth, besides producing in his waking moments so great tranquillity of soul, that he almost became another man.

In another work, a commentary on an astronomical treatise by Ptolemy, when speaking of the effect of the moon on the world generally, Cardan mentions two stones, which, though not exactly gamahes, were yet, as alleged by him, possessed of such extraordinary properties, that it is not perhaps out of place to mention them here. One was a stone belonging to Leo X., the colour of which varied from blue to white according to the intensity of the moon's light. The other belonged to Clement VII., and had a spot on it which moved from east to west, always preserving a relative position to the place of the sun in the heavens. Athanasius Kircher, Professor of Mathematics at the Jesuit College of Rome in the beginning of the seven-

teenth century, in his *Great Art of Light and Shade*, refers to a stone possessing similar properties, which had been brought from the West Indies, and, after having been submitted to the inspection of several learned men, was presented to the then king of England. It was spherical in shape, about the size of a pigeon's egg, and of an ashen colour. On it there was a clear spot, which expressed by its changing size the waxings and wanings of the moon. At the time of new moon, this spot was the size of a millet seed; but when the moon was full, it was as large as a pea. It also shewed the motions as well as the phases of the moon. In another part of the same book, after stating that there are four kinds of stones 'on which may be seen the figures of plants, trees, and fruits wonderfully engraved by nature,' he adds: 'On agates, marble, or jasper, there is almost nothing which is not naturally depicted. On these you shall see now towns, now rivers, now woods, and animals of every kind.' Opposite this passage are pictures of figured stones seen by himself, and amongst others, of a stone on which houses and a river are engraved with nearly the same kind of perspective and style of delineation as on the sculptured stones dug out at Nineveh.

Conrad Gesner, the Pliny of Germany, in a geological work where resemblances are traced between minerals and objects belonging to the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and the minerals are classified accordingly, describes a callinus or eagle-stone on which most wonderful figures were engraved. 'This callinus,' he says, 'is about as large as a bean, partly pellucid like crystal, and partly clouded like a cornelian. On the left of one side can be traced two human faces, and what resembles the shadow of a third. The first resembles a man's head covered with a cowl; the second, the head of a bearded man; but the third is so shadowy as to have no noticeable characteristics. On the right hand of this side, one face is figured which is almost a counterpart of the cowed head opposite.' This was apparently a well-known gamaha, as the names of Fabricius, Lactantius, and Agricola are mentioned in connection with it. The last named, speaking of it, said that such variety in so small a stone could not be surpassed by any artist. Gesner also mentions having seen on a slab of marble the figure of an old man, clad in a palmer's cloak, which was regarded as a picture of Paul the first, hermit, because it corresponded with the extant portraits of him. He also states that there were in the temple of St Sophia, at Constantinople, two slabs of marble, on both of which spots of an ashen colour were so disposed as to give a faithful representation—with the exception of one foot, which was indistinct—of John the Baptist clad in a camel's skin. In this book there are small woodcuts of the callinus, of a stone with a natural engraving on it of a tree, and the moon under an eclipse, and of other remarkable stones. In the *Cosmographie d'André Thevet, Cosmographie au Roi*, the author mentions having seen, on the top of a hillock between Philippopoli and the village of Rhodope, in Greece, a stone figure, three feet high, naturally cut out from the solid rock without any assistance from the hand of man, 'which might be regarded as a true image of the Virgin Mother of God holding a naked infant in her arms.'

In Armenia, at a place called Arye ('qui

est un mot Persien, qui ne signifie autre chose que Lyon'), he noticed 'a very high rock, on the middle of which were figured three oxen, and Moses, three times as large as life, standing beside them.' But the gamahes which he saw at Paros were more wonderful still. 'I saw there,' he says, 'three pieces of marble on which different objects were naturally depicted. On the first was the figure of a globe on which the land could be distinguished from the water. On the second, Nature had painted a well-proportioned likeness of a man's head, stained with blood, just as it would appear immediately after severance from the trunk. On the third, a man's head was represented covered with leaves, under which, however, the face could be easily seen.' The last was so well executed, that he considered it impossible for any graver to have drawn so cunningly as had here been done by the unaided hand of nature. Savary de Brèves, in his *Voyages tant en Grèce, Terre Sainte, et Égypte, qu'au Royaume de Tunis et Arger*, describes a figured stone which he saw in the church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. This was a slab of marble, and formed part of what represented the manger-cradle of our Lord. On it there was a figure, delineated by the casual junction and assemblage of the veins on the stone, of an old man with a beard and a long robe, coifed like a Capuchin. It was believed to be a portrait of St Jerome, 'imprinted on the stone miraculously, and by divine permission, to testify and reward him for the great zeal which he had always cherished towards the holy places, by putting his image where he, while alive, had wished to spend his days.' De Brèves also saw, in the church of St George at Venice, the figure of a crucifix on a block of marble represented with such faithfulness to details, that the nails, the wounds, and the drops of blood could all be recognised—in short, all the accessories which the most skilful painter would have introduced into such a picture. He considered this figure to be more distinctly brought out than that of St Jerome, as, in order to notice the stone-portrait of the saint, a careful inspection was necessary, and recourse must be had to the powers of the imagination.

Gaffarel, in his *Unheard-of Curiosities concerning the Talismanical Sculpture of the Persians, the Horoscope of the Patriarchs, and the Reading of the Stars*, besides referring to many of the gamahes noticed here, also mentions the following. He saw on a stone, in the church of St John at Pisa, the picture of an old hermit sitting in a desert, by the side of a brook, with a clock in his hand; and in the church of St Vitalis at Ravenna, the figure of a Franciscan friar drawn on a stone of an ashen colour. In the church at Venice where there was the gamah mentioned by De Brèves, Gaffarel saw on an altar of jasper-coloured marble the figure of a death's-head, 'so exactly drawn, that you cannot find any part of it defective.' He also states that there was found in the earth at Sneiburg 'a certain little statue of a kind of unrefined metall, naturally made, which represented in a round figure a man having a little child at his back; and whoever hath anywhere seen the picture of St Christopher, may easily conceive the shape of this. It is not long since there was found, in the Hercynian Forest, a stone that naturally represented the figure of an old man with a long beard, and crowned with a triple crown, as the pope of Rome is.'

There were different theories as to the manner

in which gamahes were produced. The sceptical Cardan admitted that such things as figured stones did exist, and that their colours were so far natural as not to be removable by the action of an acid, but refused to accord them a purely natural origin. He regarded the picture of Apollo and the Muses on the agate mentioned by Pliny as having been originally artificially painted on a piece of marble, which, by being buried in a place where agates were generated, had become an agate, but without losing the artificial colouring which had formed the original picture. This theory, however, only accounted for the figures on agates, and was not accepted by Gesner or Scaliger. These learned writers, without attempting to explain the phenomena, allowed them a purely natural origin, by supposing that the combination of the colours, or of the veins on the stone, was accidental. The generally-received theory was that which was started by Albertus Magnus, who attributed their production to the natural heat of the earth and the virtue of the stars, as he had observed that gamahes were more frequently found in warm climates. Cardan's opinion, that where the figure was embossed, and that of some natural object, as a fish or a tree, it was caused by contact with the object represented, was long considered sound. Unfortunately, however, Goropius Becanus, the philologist, who wrote a book to prove that Dutch was the language spoken in Paradise, saw, on the top of a mountain in England, 'a perch fish so perfectly figured on a stone, that you might discover both every part of the body and every little scale; so that,' as Gaffarel says, quoting from the *Nitroscope* of Becanus, 'Cardan may learn from hence that this stone could not possibly have been thus figured by the touch of any fish of the sea; neither was it a perch which had been turned into a stone; for who should carry it to the top of an uninhabitable mountain.'

The gamahes bearing the figures of serpents or other noxious animals were thought to cure the bites or stings of the animals represented. This was said to be owing to a natural tendency on the part of the figured creature to be continually seeking its own perfection, or, in other words, drawing to itself all the properties of the living animal which it did not possess. The reason given for the action not being rather towards the wounded part was, that the figure possessed a greater store of properties which attracted the smaller number. Sometimes the figured animal was able to attract even its living representatives. Of this kind was the embossed serpent seen by De Brèves on a wall connecting the Port of Tripoli with the sea. This stone possessed such attractive powers that there could be seen, when he was there, a cavern full of the carcasses and bones of serpents unable to resist its influence. But the nature of the stone alone might make a gamah a valuable *vade-mecum*. Thus, we read in a work *About Precious Stones, especially those which are mentioned in the Apocalypse of St John, and also of others which are used by all in our day—a book not less useful to theologians than to philosophers and learned men*—that agates 'are effectual antidotes to deadly poisons, and the stings of spiders and scorpions, instil into their fortunate possessor prudence and eloquence, protect him from adverse fortune, preserve his sight, refresh his heart, keep away thirst, and, when hung round the neck by a lion's hair, cure all the ailments that mortals are subject to.'

Would that this statement of Franciscus Rueus were true, and that our readers and the writer hereof were each the fortunate possessor of such good gear in so little bulk as an agate stone and a lion's hair!

TOO MUCH MONEY.

CHAPTER I.

'THE next question is, where shall she spend her holidays?' asked Uncle Charles.

'With each of us in turn,' answered Uncle John.

'No, no; that will unsettle the child's mind,' interposed Uncle David.

'Better leave her entirely to me, brothers,' quoth Uncle Henry. 'My establishment is more fit for a young girl than any of yours, because I am not quite a confirmed old bachelor—I do mean to marry some day—and you can all come and see her as often as you please.'

My uncles seemed inclined to agree to this arrangement, when one of the clerks put his head in at the door, saying: 'Lord Colooney wishes to see you, Mr Dobbs.'

All four brothers started with astonishment.

The conversation which I have just related took place in my uncle Henry's private office. Scattered about the room sat my uncles, bald-headed, Dutch-built, elderly gentlemen, with heavy watch-chains and projecting stomachs; while I, a slender little maiden of thirteen, nestled in one corner of an enormous leathern chair. I was timid and tearful, for Aunt Flora was just dead; and though Aunt Flora did not treat me nearly so familiarly as she treated Xerxes, the great Persian cat, still she was the only friend I had had for a long time.

In came Lord Colooney, a tall old gentleman with snow-white hair, a handsome colourless face, and a most attractive smile upon his lip. When he smiled, he reminded me of dear papa, and I loved him. I was surprised to see how my uncles—especially Uncle Henry—bowed down before him. Uncle Henry made such obsequious salams, that I thought he would never come up again, and yet I knew that he was immensely rich, while Lord Colooney was very poor. Presently, when these polite salutations were concluded, Lord Colooney called me to him, and taking my hands kindly in his own, asked if I knew who he was, and I said: 'Yes, you are grandpapa.' With this statement he seemed highly pleased, and gave me a kiss.

The five gentlemen then began to tattle very earnestly and very lengthily, so that although I understood a good deal that they said, I grew rather weary, and yawned once or twice privily behind my hand. Uncle John noticed this, and said kindly: 'You're getting tired, Louisa. Here, Mr Furlong, take this young lady out for a walk; shew her the shops, and buy her something to eat.'

Mr Furlong was a bristly-haired, long-legged personage, very nervous and very apologetic. He

apologised to me for having left his gloves in his greatcoat pocket, and also on discovering that he had come out with his pen behind his ear. I had two buns and a strawberry-ice at a pastry-cook's, and then he asked me what sort of shops I would like to look at. I said I would sooner go into a quiet place, away from the noise of the carriages. So he took me into a delightful little churchyard, with houses all round it. He remained so silent, that I thought he hated having to come out with me, and I asked him why he did not talk.

'It's not my place, miss,' he said humbly, 'to talk to a young lady like you. I'm only a clerk'—he pronounced the word as if rhyming to Turk—'while you are grand-daughter to a peer of the realm, and heiress to thirty thousand pounds.'

'Thirty thousand pounds! Are you sure?'

'Positive, miss. The governor sent me down to the Commons to look at the will.'

'And who has given me all this money?'

'Your aunt, Miss Flora Dobbs, miss.'

By this time Mr Furlong had overcome his shyness, and told me what a clever woman my aunt was, and how she spent all her life in the accumulation of house-property.

'Being a child, you only knew her, miss, as a lover of cats. But cats was merely her relaxation. Leaseholds, copyholds, ground-rents, and carcasses was the business of her life; and she doubled her original capital.'

Mr Furlong grew gradually more and more communicative, and launched out into such praises of my father, that my eyes sparkled with pleasure.

'Four times,' he said, 'have I had the honour of seeing the captain. What a fine, 'andsome, manly gentleman he was! Free-handed, like most Irish gents, but a perfect nobleman in his ideas. And when I heard he was drowned aboard the yacht in Cardigan Bay, I took the Bills Receivable out of the safe, and looking at the acceptances signed Adam Fitzadam, I said with a sigh: "Ah, nobody will take you up now when you come to maturity!"'

I did not understand this flight of eloquence, but it sounded very pathetic; and as Mr Furlong drew his coat-sleeve across his eyes, I wiped away a tear or two with my pocket-handkerchief.

'I think, miss, we had better be returning,' said Mr Furlong. 'And, oh, Miss Fitzadam!' he continued, in a heartfelt tone, 'should it ever be in your power—which, doubtless, it will—to 'elp a poor clerk who has only a 'underd a year, and an aged relative to keep out of that, not to mention an attachment of seven years' standing at Camberwell, but unable to be compassed through poverty on both sides, I hope, Miss Fitzadam, you won't forget the humble party who now addresses you.'

'I promise you I will not,' I exclaimed warmly.

When we returned to the office, I found that all my relatives had left excepting Uncle Henry, who was seated alone with Lord Colooney.

'Well, Louisa,' said my grandfather, 'we have settled our business, and I hope you will approve of the arrangement. Your uncles have, in the most generous and disinterested manner—I allude especially to Mr Henry Dobbs—waived the natural desire they felt to superintend your education.'

They have consented to intrust that duty to my unworthy self. I would not have ventured to undertake the task, but for the confidence which I repose in Lady Colooney's prudence and wisdom.'

'It's much the best plan, my lord,' observed Uncle Henry; 'and I hope your lordship will excuse my brothers Charles and David for their rudeness. As for John, I knew he would listen to my arguments. He always does, my lord. There can't be any question in the matter. We are plain commercial men, immersed in business, while your lordship is hand-in-glove with the world of fashion. My niece's fortune is held in trust by us four brothers, and I hope she may live to adorn such a station as your lordship and her ladyship may see fit to bestow upon her.'

'Are you satisfied, Louisa?' asked my grandfather with a sweet smile, as he drew me towards him.

'Quite satisfied,' said I, kissing his cheek.

Uncle Henry also saluted me, and the interview came to an end.

CHAPTER II.

The Dobbsses were a money-making family. My great-grandfather, who came up to London with a seven-shilling piece and fourpence-halfpenny in his pocket, left a very pretty fortune to his son. My grandfather managed this pretty fortune so cleverly that he enlarged it into what was called a 'plum' in those days. At his death, his 'plum' was divided fairly and equitably among four sons and two daughters. My uncles, especially Henry and John, had all increased their original proportions by assiduous industry; and Aunt Flora, as I have shewn, followed their example. But my mother, who was the child of my grandfather's old age, seemed to be cast in a different mould. A year after my grandfather's death, she delivered her fortune, together with her own pretty hand, to the unconditional care and keeping of the Honourable Adam Fitzadam, Captain in Her Majesty's —th Dragoons, and Lord Colooney's youngest son. My prudent uncles disapproved of the match; and Aunt Flora was very angry indeed at Louisa's sentimental folly in marrying the younger son of a pauper peer (my respected aunt seems to have relished this bit of alliteration, for I find it repeated seven times in her correspondence of that period). But what did my mother care? She was a high-spirited wilful young lady, and she loved Captain Fitzadam's little finger better than the corporal substance of all her brothers and sisters put together. I don't wonder that she loved my father, for he was a most lovable man. And such a handsome man, too! Such a noble figure, such beautiful blue eyes, and such waving brown hair! Full of fun and frolic; and on wet days—which are not uncommon in the west of Ireland—he would play Puss-in-the-corner with mamma and me, and Norah the nurse, as if he had been only six years old. But he had some peculiarities. He fancied, as was very natural for a young Irish gentleman, that my mother's sixteen thousand pounds was sixteen thousand a year. So he kept a pack of hounds, and ran horses at the races, and bought a yacht, and entertained his friends royally. Mamma and I often accompanied him on board the yacht, and I used to help to pull up what are called the signal-halyards with my little feeble hands. How well I recollect one especial day on Kingstown Pier! My father, in

his straw-hat and blue jacket, looking every inch a sailor-king, wanted my mother to cross over with him to Cardigan Bay. But she declined, because her health was just then a little delicate. So he and two jovial bachelor friends went together, and we watched them waving their hats as they hoisted mamma's private flag. We never saw him again. Some said the vessel made too much water, others hinted that there was too much champagne on board. Whatever was the cause, the *Norah Creina* foundered off the Caernarvonshire coast, and though everybody else escaped in the boat, my poor father, who was a most excellent swimmer, was drowned.

I have only a confused recollection of what followed. Our nice house seems to have been transported by some magic influence into a back-street in Dublin, the garden had shrunk into a shabby yard, and mamma did not look so pretty as she used to look. She had pale cheeks and red eyes; and after my little brother was born (of course he was called Adam), she stayed in bed a good deal. We had a great many visitors, but they were mostly disagreeable people, who used to have long conferences with Norah in the passage, and never got any further—except one man, a very nice man with a dirty face, who was always in the kitchen, and who taught me how to make garden-nets. He told me his name was Mr Bailiff. I suspect we were very poor at that time; but mamma declared that she would not ask her brothers and sister to help her, because they had been so unkind about Captain Fitzadam. At last mamma grew very ill, and then Aunt Flora came over from England with two pet cats in a basket. Mr Bailiff went away, and the dinners became much nicer than they used to be. But mamma had no appetite for the nice dinners; she got paler and weaker every day, and when little Adam died in teething, she soon followed him. The interval was really longer; but, to my childish recollection, the great black box and the little black box seem to have been both carried out of the house on the same day.

CHAPTER III.

Nobody troubled themselves about me in those days except Aunt Flora, and even she was only distantly kind when I came home for the holidays. But when Aunt Flora died, and left me all her property (except five hundred pounds devised for the purpose of founding a Refuge for the Stray Cats of St George's, Bloomsbury), I became quite an important personage. My uncles vied, as I have shewn, for the honour of entertaining me; and my grandfather, who had hitherto remained contentedly ignorant of my existence, carried me away with him to Paris. Lady Colooney, his second wife, who had a large family of her own, received me very graciously, which was not surprising; for, by a private arrangement with Uncle Henry, the whole interest of my thirty thousand pounds was paid quarterly to my grandfather, and constituted a very pleasant addition to the precarious income which he derived from his heavily-mortgaged property in Connought. But far greater luck was in store for me. Within a few years, my uncle Henry died, without even accomplishing his long-intended marriage, and left me the whole of his fortune—more than two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Uncle John, who during life had always followed his stronger-

minded brother's example, imitated him by dying a few months later, and bequeathing me seventy thousand pounds. Thus, a girl who, only a few years before, was left a penniless orphan, found herself, at the age of seventeen, worth at least three hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

I felt rather vexed than pleased at the amazing increase of my wealth. Thirty thousand pounds was a very nice sum to marry with, but ten times that amount was a burden and an annoyance. I did not forget my old acquaintance, Mr Furlong, who had been thrown out of employment by my uncle Henry's death. I should have liked to have given him a thousand pounds (a mere drop out of the ocean of my riches), just to enable him to marry his Camberwell sweetheart comfortably; but Lady Colooney, to whom I mentioned the matter, talked so solemnly of the responsibilities of people of property, declaring that my gift would be the ruin of a well-conducted and industrious young man, that I was forced to content myself by recommending him to my uncles Charles and David. They were now in partnership together, and wishing to oblige their powerful ward, made Mr Furlong their chief-clerk.

The Colooneys benefited immensely by my improved fortunes. My grandfather, who used to live in a poorly-furnished *appartement*, who dined, when not invited elsewhere, at a modest restaurant, and who had much ado to keep the second family with which Lady C. presented him decently attired, now came over to England, and lived in a style consistent with his grand-daughter's riches. He took a sumptuous Belgrevian mansion, and gave grand entertainments. One son entered the Guards, another became a gentleman-commoner at Oxford, while my aunts (it seems funny to call them aunts, for they were girls of my own age) astonished the world by the brilliancy and variety of their toilets. As for myself, I ought to have been very happy, for my grandfather treated me with the most charming politeness, Lady Colooney was honey-sweet; all the family arrangements were made to depend on my sovereign will and pleasure. But I soon began to feel the disadvantages of great wealth; I became as notorious as if I had committed a murder. The newspapers chronicled my movements in a very special manner. I had a little Court Circular all to myself. As for begging-letter writers, from clergymen wanting to build new churches, down to carpenters who had just lost their tool-chests in a fire, I should have been inundated with them, had not Lady Colooney (an admirable manager in this respect) kept them off. Even in society, I was gazed at rather unpleasantly. People seemed to wonder that a girl who had suddenly become a millionaire should look like any one else, and I think some of my own sex were disappointed to find that I was not extraordinarily plain. Then I was never suffered to be alone. Should the other members of the family quit the room in which I was sitting, a confidential governess or a trustworthy friend would glide in, as if by magic. Did I retire for half an hour's solitude to my *boudoir*, there was always a lady's maid seated in the antechamber. I complained to Lady Colooney about it, and she answered me quite frankly. 'My dearest Louisa,' she said solemnly, 'in your position it is absolutely necessary. Your great fortune compels us to treat you almost as if you were a royal personage. You are young and inexperienced; you have no idea, my

sweet child, what snares and traps beset the path of an heiress.' I knew what this meant in plain English—it meant that there were plenty of people ready to run away with me against my will; and that those charmingly-polite tradesmen who come and shew to us wealthy folks lace, old china, and diamond bracelets, might possibly be unscrupulous heiress-hunting adventurers. I dreamed one night that two villains, disguised as washerwomen, carried me off in a clothes-basket, and held me to ransom in some dreadful garret for a hundred thousand pounds.

One thing was soon settled, that I was to marry a duke. Unfortunately, there were only six disengaged dukes, and I did not care for any of them. But Lady Colooney convinced me that I must either marry a man as wealthy as myself, or else a man of the most exalted rank. Any other match, she said, would be degrading to a person in my position. 'Heigh-ho!' I used to say to myself, when watching some poor milliner or governess tripping along the streets all alone and unprotected, 'who would wish to be rich? I am kept under the strictest surveillance, and treated like a superfine ticket-of-leave man. I am weary of perpetual deference and adulation. I should enjoy a good wholesome scolding, such as Norah used to administer. Now, nobody scolds me, and nobody loves me. I am merely an animated "Koh-i-noor;" something which every one regards with intense watchfulness and anxiety.'

CHAPTER IV.

Conceive a young lady with three hundred and fifty thousand pounds in love! It sounds ridiculous, but it was true. Moreover, it was secret, unreciprocated love. I met him several times in society, and I first took an interest in him because he talked to me with frankness and freedom. The young men generally were so tiresomely amiable, or else so shy and diffident, I suppose on account of my unlucky wealth, that I could not tolerate them. But Captain Ratcliffe seemed totally indifferent to my bank treasures, and treated me as a young lady whose society he preferred for her own sake. I told Lady Colooney this, and that he actually scolded me (I forget what for, but the sensation was very pleasant). She replied that I little knew the cunning of the masculine heart, and that Captain Ratcliffe's blunt sincerity was far more suspicious than the most fulsome adulation. 'But, my child,' says she, 'you must not dream of him for a moment. He is a man of good family, but utterly poor. He has only his staff-appointment (worth about four hundred a year) and his captain's pay, with a prospect of ten thousand pounds when his mother dies. You might as well think of marrying the hall-porter.' I afterwards regretted that I had displayed my *penchant* so transparently to her acute ladyship, for by some Machiavellian contrivance (as I thought at the time), she managed that we should no longer meet. Wherever we went, to dinner-parties, fêtes, or 'drums,' I looked anxiously for my captain's tall figure, but he remained invisible.

One day while I was meditating about Captain Ratcliffe, and wondering whether, on further acquaintance, he could possibly separate me from my detestable money-bags, and love me for my own sake—while I was thus building a day-dream, and sipping an afternoon cup of tea in company

with my grandfather and his wife, Lord Colooney suddenly set down his tea-cup, uttered a diplomatic h—m, and then addressed me in the following alarming language:

'Louisa, my dear, I am growing old, and you are nearly nineteen.—Two undeniable facts, and of a sufficiently prosaic character, but to me very terrifying, for I guessed what was coming next.—'I should much like, and so would Lady Colooney' (she was only forty-seven, and did not care to be addressed as grandmamma); 'we should much like, my dear, to see you engaged to some honourable and respectable man. You will perhaps hereafter appreciate much more than you can at present, the labours and anxieties which we have both undergone on your behalf. You are probably scarcely aware of, the responsibilities attaching to the guardianship of a young person whom Providence has blessed so bountifully.'

'In fact, my dear Louisa,' interposed Lady Colooney, who began to perceive that her worthy lord was becoming a little prosy, 'many overtures have been made for the honour of your hand. We desired to consult your happiness, and that alone, and we have been compelled to reject them all.'

'Has Captain—Ratcliffe,' I asked, stammering and blushing, 'said anything to you, Lady Colooney?'

'Certainly not, my dear,' answered my grandfather almost sternly. 'The offers I speak of were from persons of far higher position; but at length a proposal has been made from a quarter which Lord Colooney and myself consider unexceptionable.'

'One of the six dukes?' I asked rather pertly.

'You are right, Louisa,' replied Lady Colooney, smothering any resentment which she might feel at my manner: 'it is one of the six dukes.'

'I hope not the Duke of Cockermouth, that gouty old creature!'

'No, my love. A most excellent, highly-principled young man—only three years older than yourself.'

'Barnstaple?'

'Yes, the Duke of Barnstaple. He is not rich; so that, as Colooney has very pointedly observed, your wealth will gracefully gild his coronet; but he has sufficient to prevent people from saying that he married for money. You will be a nice, snug, comfortable couple, with, I should say, about twenty-five thousand a year. Not a large income for a duke, but an income which a prudent young man like Barnstaple will, I am sure, find sufficient.'

I could not help smiling to hear Lady Colooney talk so glibly about twenty-five thousand a year, when I remembered that in her Parisian *troisième étage* days, she did her own marketing, and was reckoned such a keen bargainer, that the *Dames des Halles* fled at her approach.

'Well, Louisa, what do you think of it?' asked my grandfather.

'I don't know what to think of it,' I answered coolly; 'I suppose I must marry somebody, if I don't wish to ripen into a millionaire old maid; and, after all, dukes are a very respectable body of men.—But do you think, Lady Colooney,' I added with some hesitation, 'that the duke can possibly feel any—any—regard for me?'

'My love,' she said, kissing me affectionately, and shedding a tear as she did so, which rolled down my neck, and disconcerted me extremely, 'you shall hear from his own lips to-morrow; he is coming to dine with us.'

CHAPTER V.

I often used to wonder, as I sat before the glass, while Euphemia was busy adorning me for the evening sacrifice, whether I was really nice-looking. I could not trust my own eyes; they were sure to be partial, and I could not get an opinion from any one else. If I questioned Euphemia, she burst into a subdued little lady's-maidish laugh, and beginning: 'Dear me, miss,' would pour forth a wishy-washy flood of palpable flattery. Now, I think an heiress has more right to be anxious about her looks than any one else, for if she is pretty, somebody may possibly forget her bank securities, and fall in love with her beauty; whereas, if she is a fright, she may be nearly certain that her cash, and her cash only, is the object of the false swain's worship.

Of course, I was anxious to look well that evening when the duke was coming—I should not be a woman if I had not. Besides, it was to be a most private festival. Nobody but my grandfather, Lady Colooney, myself, and the future Husband. At a large dinner-party, one may escape notice; but when there are only four people at table, you can, without any staring or breach of politeness, examine every item of your neighbours' dress, features, and expression. Well, the duke arrived, and we all stood quietly at the drawing-room windows admiring the sunset, which, for a London exhibition of the kind, was quite a gorgeous affair; then at a quarter to nine we sat down to dinner—Lord and Lady Colooney at the head and foot of the table, and his Grace and myself opposite each other. The old folks prattled very pleasantly to make up for the young folks' silence. I suspect both of us youthful persons were sadly *distracted*. I knew what the duke had come for, and I wondered whether he suspected that I knew. He was really very nice-looking—about the middle height, with a fair, fresh, open face, and little downy whiskers just budding on his cheeks. Rather given to blushing, but that, perhaps, was because I sat opposite him. He talked with the utmost naturalness and modesty, and was certainly as pleasant a specimen of a 'bloated aristocrat' as I have ever encountered.

The conversation during dinner was utterly trivial and uninteresting; but at dessert, Lord Colooney began to speak of the prospects of the forthcoming grouse-season in Scotland.

'I've got a letter to-day,' said the duke, 'that makes me rather despise grouse-shooting, or even deer-stalking. Read that, Colooney.' My grandfather raised his glasses, and read the passage indicated. 'I had the honour of putting a bullet into the skull of the old lion, while the sheik and his followers settled the lioness. I mean to bring the cubs home, and if your Grace will open a menagerie at Dulverton Manor, shall have much pleasure in presenting them to you.'

'Only fancy, Miss Fitzadam!' said the duke; 'this glorious sport is within a week's journey of where we are now sitting—in the Atlas Mountains. Captain Ratcliffe's a lucky fellow.'

'Is that Captain Ratcliffe of the —th regiment?' I asked, colouring.

'Yes. Do you know him? Capital fellow—splendid shot, and good horseman.'

'We know him very slightly,' interposed Lady Colooney, who had observed my blushes.

We ladies now rose from table, and left the gentlemen to that curt enjoyment of their wine,

which is sanctioned by modern habits. On reaching the drawing-room, Lady Colooney again kissed my cheek, murmuring as she did so: 'My child, no wonder you feel agitated' (for a girl of nineteen, who was about to encounter a proposal, I felt remarkably cool); 'but I can judge of your sensations by my own. It will soon be over, Louisa' (Lady C. spoke as if it was a tooth), 'and everything is arranged. Colooney will slip quietly out of the room; I shall presently follow; and I shall give Liphthorpe' (this was the butler) 'the most stringent orders to admit no one to the drawing-room for twenty minutes following.'

Presently the gentlemen came up stairs, and I began to feel really nervous, especially when my respected grandfather, muttering some indistinct remark about an important letter on his dressing-table, left the room. Her ladyship brought a volume of eighteenth-century caricatures for the duke to look at, in my company of course, and then she also slid imperceptibly out of the room. I did not dare look up, nor did I hear her go, yet I knew that she had gone, and that I and the man who wished to make me his wife were left alone together. I felt so silly and so shy, and was so certain that the duke must notice an enormous blush which seemed to spread from my forehead to my shoulders, that I kept on staring at one sketch without uttering a word.

'You seem struck with that drawing, Miss Fitzadam,' said the duke.

'No—yes—that is—I beg your Grace's pardon—I was thinking how familiar the hooped dress seems to the eye. It gives the picture quite a modern look.'

'Exactly,' replied his Grace. Then with an altered air, and a flurried tone of voice, he continued, after looking up from the sketch-book: 'Miss Fitzadam, I perceive that your grandfather and grandmother (I beg your pardon, I mean Lady Colooney) happen to be both out of the room. May I take the opportunity to say a few words to you on a subject which deeply concerns my future happiness?'

The poor young man delivered this sentence with wonderful glibness; I have no doubt he had learned it by heart, like a maiden-speech for the House; but after it, he broke into a succession of short spasmodic ejaculations, of which I can recollect very little, for I was myself quite pale, and much more frightened than I had expected to be. But he said something of this sort:

'Admired you immensely, Miss Fitzadam, the first moment I saw you—Fraid you think I'm too young—fault I shall amend every year, ha! ha!—ought to marry—man in my position—never seen any girl—any one, I mean—like so well—if you'll take me, Miss Fitzadam, do all I can to make you a happy wife.'

He looked so modest and yet so manly as he said these words, that my heart was touched, and the tears gathered in my eyes. 'Perhaps he really loves me,' I thought. Then I told him how sudden the proposal had been, that he must excuse me from saying either 'Yes' or 'No' at present; that we must see more of each other; and that in a few months—

The duke evidently took all this to mean 'Yes,' for he interrupted my broken utterances by respectfully kissing my hand, and then (I suppose Liphthorpe gave the signal) my grandfather re-entered the room in the most hypocritically-

unconcerned manner, followed by Lady Colooney, who, as if her whole soul was devoted to prints, exclaimed vivaciously: 'Duke, I've found the second volume of the caricatures!' And indeed one of Mr Liphthorpe's myrmidons brought it in on a tray, and so ended the proposal-scene.

CHAPTER VI.

Of course the wedding-engagement (for such it became) of two such great personages as his Grace of Barnstaple and myself soon got mysteriously hinted at in the fashionable newspapers. Months passed away; Seymour and I (I give his Christian name) saw more of each other, and liked each other better for the increased acquaintance. The season came to an end. Seymour went to the moors, and my grandfather and his wife accompanied me on a visit to a certain Mrs Lomax, an old widow-lady in Devonshire.

They were rather late risers in that house, and the postman used to arrive before we descended to breakfast. One morning as I was coming down stairs, I was surprised to overhear Mrs Lomax, who was usually a lethargic person, saying in an excited tone of voice to one of the servants: 'Have you taken the letters to Miss Fitzadam's room?'

'No, ma'am.'

'Give them to me then—give them to me; she must on no account have them.'

What could be the matter? I entered the breakfast-parlour, and found Lady Colooney seated on the sofa, sobbing hysterically; while my grandfather stood at the mantle-piece, his face deadly pale, and an open letter in his hand.

'My dear!' exclaimed Mrs Lomax hurriedly, 'you had better not come in just now.—Take her to her room, do, poor creature,' she said, addressing another old lady, a tall venerable-looking personage, 'while I attend to the Colooneys.'

I did not know the lady—a Mrs Ratcliffe—who led me gently yet forcibly up stairs, for she was a visitor, who, being as early in her habits as Mrs Lomax was late, had come five-and-twenty miles by railway that morning.

I was terribly agitated. 'Tell me, I beg you, madam,' I said, as soon as I reached my room, 'what is the matter?'

'I really do not know,' replied the visitor kindly. 'I had scarcely taken off my bonnet when the post arrived, and Lord and Lady Colooney immediately became so deeply affected.'

'One of their children must be ill or dead. Please inquire for me; I must know, dear Mrs—'

'Ratcliffe,' said the old lady quietly, and left the room.

That name sent a thrill through my heart, for which I felt ashamed. I had reason to be ashamed, for the next instant I was thinking of Seymour. 'Perhaps,' I thought, 'some terrible accident on the moors has'—

'It is neither death nor illness,' said Mrs Ratcliffe, as she quietly re-entered the room.

'Thank God! thank God!' I exclaimed.

'But as regards yourself, they tell me it is worse news than that.'

'Worse than that! What can be worse than that?'

'Miss Fitzadam, you have two uncles, mercantile men.'

'Yes, Uncles Charles and David; what of them?'

'Last year they took another partner into their business.'

'Well?'

'My dear young lady, he led them into enormous speculations; they lost severely, and in trying to save themselves from failure, have misappropriated almost all your property.'

'And is that all, dear Mrs Ratchliffe? I am so happy; I'—

But the excitement was too much for me, and I fainted away.

CHAPTER VII.

The Duke of Barnstaple (I must cease to call him Seymour) wrote me a very handsome, honourable letter, saying that no reverse of fortune would induce him to recall his declaration; but I fancied I could trace in its sentences a tone of coldness and restraint, so I replied bluntly, that unless he were certain he could love me for my own sake, we had better break off the engagement. Some third party (a friend of the duke's) then intervened, and began a long correspondence with Lady Colooney. The end of it was that the compact was dissolved, to my great contentment. But oh! you can't conceive the buoyancy of my spirits when I found that I was reduced to comfortable poverty! When the bankrupts' estate was wound up, I received five thousand pounds, and perhaps one of these days I shall get a further dividend. Then I went down to the City in great state in a common street-cab, and called at my uncle's counting-house. Anxiety and disgrace had turned them into two shrunken old men. They looked at me as if I had been a ghost.

'Uncles Charles and David,' I said heartily, 'I have come to thank you.'

At these words they stared at me with open mouths.

'For losing my fortune. Nature did not intend me for a rich woman. That three hundred and fifty thousand pounds was a terrible burden. I am now comfortably poor, and thoroughly happy.'

I believe they thought I was crazy. At last Uncle Charles ventured to speak.

'You recollect that clerk, Louisa, that took you to the pastry-cook's six years ago?'

'Of course I do: why, I recommended him to you.'

'Ah! so you did,' groaned Uncle Charles. 'My memory's failing. Well, that clerk was the cause of our ruin. He was what they call an enterprising man. We took him into partnership, and'—

'He has landed us in Basinghall Street,' said Uncle David.

'As far as I am concerned,' I said, 'Mr Furlong has my full and free forgiveness. But let me ask one question. Did he ever marry the Camberwell lady?'

'He did, and it was her love of dress and gaiety that first set him speculating.'

'How hard it is to do good in this world!' I murmured.

To conclude. Uncles Charles and David are on their legs again, doing a small safe business, such as befits two old bachelors of sixty-five. Mr Furlong is in America. As for myself, I made great friends with Mrs Ratchliffe, and in the course of our acquaintance discovered a secret. The secret was, that I had made a deep impression on her son

months before, but as he did not dare to propose to a millionaire, he determined to deaden his grief by slaying lions in Algeria. You may conceive that what I confided in return to Mrs Ratchliffe was of so encouraging a nature, that after a while Captain Ratchliffe spoke to me himself on the subject; and the end of it is that we mean to cast in our lot together, and become one of the happiest couples in Honeymoonshire.

THE THRESHER'S SONG.

FLAIL and flail, we cheer'ly work,
Morn till eve, in barton gray;
All who pass may list the jerk,
Whence the straw-stems flee away
Corn be-dropping:
Seldom stopping,
Our stout arms keep up their play.

Scarce has Chanticleer his song
Sounded at the old barn-door,
Ere the lanes we wend along
Till we reach the polished floor,
Where, 'pit, pat'
Now sharp, now flat,
Falls the flail-stroke evermore.

MERCY's gift is sleep at night—
Boon to those who toil by day!
Strength again by morning light
Brings to limbs accustomed away:
Blithely, gaily,
Working daily
See, we keep grim Want at bay.

Through the homestead, through the orchard,
Where the moss-grown trees abound,
'Mong the echoes of the garden,
Hark, the flail-stroke's lively sound;
Comforts bringing,
Cheer'ly ringing,
Till the Sabbath's rest comes round!

Sure, 'tis something for the heart
Firmly in its hold to keep—
(When on week-day toil we start,
Gathering to the old corn-heap)—
Where shall we
Then gathered be
When the angels come to 'reap?'

Meantime, on our daily duty
Blessings, we may trust, descend,
When, for our beloved ones working,
O'er the weighty flails we bend—
With arms lusty,
With hearts trusty,
Work for 'Master' as our friend!

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